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THE STELA OF  
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**THE STELA  
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PLATE I.

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THE STELA  
OF  
MENTHU-WESER

BY  
CAROLINE L. RANSOM  
ASSISTANT CURATOR  
DEPARTMENT OF EGYPTIAN ART



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## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

THE stela of Menthu-weser (accession number 12.184), found at Abydos, was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 1912 through the generosity of Mr. Edward S. Harkness. The material is limestone and the measurements are as follows: height, m. 1.03; width, m. 0.50; thickness, m. 0.08.

More than half the stela is occupied by an inscription arranged in three horizontal and sixteen vertical lines. The characters are rudely incised and the stone-cutter has made many mistakes in working from his copy which was in hieratic writing. The occurrence of rare words and the probability of some corruptions in the text render the inscription exceedingly difficult. A few passages baffle translation. The text is, however, of high importance for the study both of the language and of economic conditions under the Twelfth Dynasty. It is dated in the seventeenth year of Sesostris I, that is, about 1963 B. C.<sup>1</sup> Lines 4-19 are cast in a popular

<sup>1</sup>Counting from the date 2000 B. C., fixed on astronomical evidence (with a margin of error of four years) as the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty. MEYER, *Aegyptische Chronologie* (Abb. der königl. preuss. Akad. der Wissenschaften vom Jahre 1904), pp. 18 and 51ff.



## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

literary form of the Middle Kingdom—autobiography. A translation and a discussion of many of its points of interest will be found below.<sup>2</sup>

The lower part of the stela is decorated by a relief which is excellent in technic and pleasing in its colors. Menthuwesi is seated before a well-laden table of offerings. His chair is of a design common in the Middle Kingdom. It has a low straight back and no arms. The side rails terminate behind in the form of a conventionalized papyrus umbel. The legs are an imitation of the legs of a lion. There is a touch of barbarism in the thoroughness with which this imitation is carried out. Outside of Egypt the designer would have contented himself with claw feet merely. In this instance not only is the entire leg of the animal reproduced, but the front legs of the chair are formed like the forelegs of the lion and the back legs like the lion's hind legs. The back of the chair is covered by a thick cushion.

The table consists of a central support and movable, round (?) top. The offerings upon it are depicted with the usual disregard of relative size and include a leg joint<sup>3</sup> and ribs, a

<sup>2</sup> I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the help afforded me by the privilege of using the Berlin Dictionary. Both for granting this privilege and for discussing some of the difficulties of the text with me, I am greatly indebted to Professor Erman. My thanks are due also to Professor Breasted for his kindness in looking through my manuscript and in making some corrections and suggestions and to Dr. Hermann Grapow for some suggestions. While wishing fully to acknowledge the stimulus and aid thus generously given, I should make clear that none of the scholars mentioned has made himself in any sense a sponsor for the translation or for the comments on the text contained in the following pages.

<sup>3</sup> Probably of beef, the scene of the cutting up of an ox and the carrying off of leg joints being very common on the monuments. The lower part of the leg is rather delicately formed, more like that of a wild animal, but this can be paralleled in certain representations of leg joints of beef in the scenes mentioned.

## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

calf's head of startling realism, various loaves of bread and cake, a gourd, leeks, a lotus flower,<sup>4</sup> and an unidentified object.<sup>5</sup>


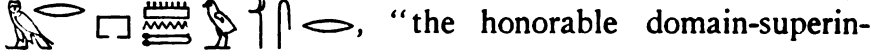
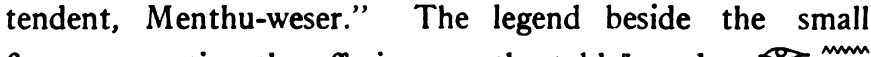







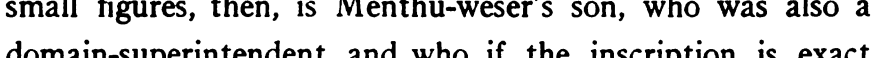
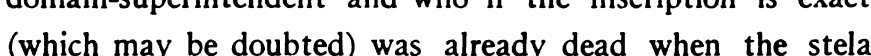
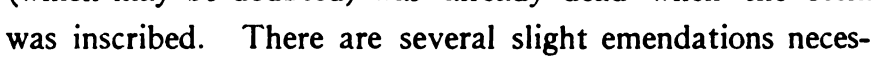
Besides Menthu-weser there are three figures on the relief, a man standing in the lower right-hand corner, a woman crouching in front of him by the table, and a man standing in the upper right-hand corner. The standing figure in the lower right-hand corner presents two jars, one with nearly spherical body and short neck, the other a covered bowl. The latter may possibly have been intended for incense. Its cover seems to have a low handle. All three men wear short skirts and two of them broad collars. Menthu-weser has on a long wig, leaving the ears exposed, while the two others are apparently shorn. The little figure crouched beside the table wears the usual narrow, long woman's garment. This is normally fastened over the shoulder by straps, which here, however, the artist has failed to indicate. The woman's wig is longer than Menthu-weser's and covers her ears. In Menthu-weser's left hand is an object<sup>6</sup> for which no adequate explanation has yet been found.

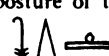
<sup>4</sup> Clearly the blue lotus—*Castalia caerulea*.

<sup>5</sup> The plant (?) or vegetable (?) in question has numerous long pointed leaves which overlap, a solid end, and, according to some representations, a stem. In this instance, but for its size, one might be tempted to see in it a head of beardless wheat, but even an Egyptian artist would hardly have made a head of wheat so much bigger relatively than the nearby objects. Furthermore, on a polychrome coffin in the Metropolitan Museum (12.183.11 A) having a representation of the same object, the leaves have preserved their green color, and are thin and to some extent curling. The solid end is white with red veining. The frequency with which this particular offering occurs on the monuments of the Old and Middle Kingdoms and the Empire indicates that it must have been a very common product of the Nile Valley. The only suggestions I have seen as to its identity are contained in the following references: STEINDORFF, *Der Sarg des Sebk-o*, Pl. II, p. 6, "Artischocke(?)" and NAVILLE, *Deir el Babari*, I, Pls. VII, XV, XX, XXI, p. 13, "probably a kind of lettuce."

<sup>6</sup> A folded piece of cloth? Often shown in grave-reliefs in the hand of the deceased.

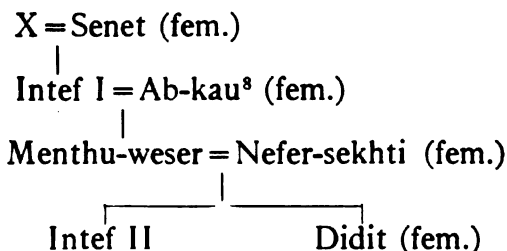
## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

In front of Menthu-weser's face is the legend: , "the honorable domain-superintendent, Menthu-weser." The legend beside the small figure presenting the offerings on the table<sup>7</sup> reads: , "that which [his] son, the deceased domain-superintendent Intef, made for him, causing his name to live," and lower, in front of the skirt, , "born of Nefer-sekhti." The uppermost of the small figures, then, is Menthu-weser's son, who was also a domain-superintendent and who if the inscription is exact (which may be doubted) was already dead when the stela was inscribed. There are several slight emendations necessary.  has been omitted after  and  after  in *rn-f*, and the  has been reversed. The position of  after  (see Pl. I) is due to the fact that it fitted well into the triangular area described by the skirt and the other signs of the legend. The woman beside the table is accompanied by the following words: , "his beloved daughter Didit, born of Nefer-sekhti." Above the remaining figure is inscribed:  and lower down . The last phrase "Intef, born of Senet" is clear. The first little sentence is ambiguous. Grammatically it will admit of either of two translations:

<sup>7</sup> Professor Breasted calls my attention to the posture of this figure—with extended arm—as the ceremonially correct one for uttering a  and to SETHE, *Urkunden*, IV, pp. 28–29 where the attitude is described.

## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

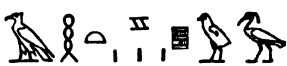
“his father who made his name to live for him” or “his father whose name he made to live.” According to the first, it is Intef, the father, who made the name of the deceased Menthu-weser live, and inasmuch as Intef I is actually represented here in the lower right-hand corner presenting offerings to the son, this is probably the correct reading. Yet it is a puzzling reversal of the natural order, and but for the relief one would prefer the second translation by which the son made the father’s name live. The family tree can now be reconstructed:



For a discussion of the name Intef, see ERMAN in *Zeitschr. f. d. ägypt. Sprache*, Vol. xxxix (1901), p. 147. Senet and Didit are very common and exclusively feminine names, which are especially characteristic of the Middle Kingdom. Nefer-sekhti, on the other hand, is thus far unique among known Egyptian names. The meaning “good with respect to a field(?)” or “my field is good(?)” is not clear. If we may suppose the feminine ending omitted from *nfr*, the name as a woman’s name has some point and one is reminded of the

<sup>8</sup> See line 3 of the main inscription.

## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

sentence in the Proverbs of Ptah-hotep:  "a field she is, profitable for her lord."<sup>9</sup>

Before turning to the long inscription, the border and the colors remaining on the stela may be described. Alternating large and small rectangles, defined by red lines, form the border at the top and sides of the stela. Of the large rectangles, every second one is colored red and every fourth one has a tiny, casually executed, red circle near its center. This was intended as an indication to the painter in mapping out the arrangement of the colors. The rectangles so marked were once solid blue. In one the red circle appears dimly beneath the blue which has partly flaked off, and in the others the blue has entirely or nearly disappeared leaving the preliminary red mark. The other border rectangles, large and small, are devoid of color. At the bottom of the stela, the border has three horizontal divisions, the uppermost blue, the middle one showing no trace of paint, and the lowest yellow. The hieroglyphs, however, though stained here and there, show no certain traces of any ancient color. The red flesh-tones of the men and the yellow of the nude parts of the woman's figure in the relief are well preserved. The ribs of beef and the upper part of the leg joint on the table are red. The stem of the lotus flower is also red and there are slight remains of this color on the calf's head as well as streaks of red winding about the table support. The two conical loaves, the base

<sup>9</sup> PRISSE D'AVENNES, *Fac-similé d'un papyrus égyptien*, 10, 12. Cf. BREASTED, *Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 234, note 1, where the occurrence of essentially the same thought in the Koran is noted.

## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

of the lotus flower, and the entire chair frame, except for the blocks under the feet, are yellow. Traces of blue may be detected on the woman's wig, Menthu-weser's girdle and wig, and on the lotus petals. Other parts of the relief, as the men's skirts and the finger-nails of the figures, either were originally left, as they now appear, in the natural color of the limestone, or they have completely lost their colors.



## THE MAIN INSCRIPTION

### I. INTRODUCTORY LINES (Pl. I)



<sup>1</sup> Year seventeen under the Majesty of the Horus, Ankh-meswet, good god, Kheper-ka-re, living forever. My Majesty has given to thee this grave-stela as <sup>2</sup>an offering which the king gives. Osiris, great god, lord of Abydos—may he give mortuary offerings of bread, beer, beef, fowl, bags (of cosmetics? of natron?), clothing, all good and pure things from which <sup>3</sup>a god lives for the ka of the honored domain-superintendent Menthu-weser, born of Ab-kau.


Sixteen or more dated grave-stelae extending from the Line 1  
seventh to the forty-fourth year of the reign of this king  
(Sesostris I) have come down to us. A list of those known  
to me will be found at the end of this essay.

For an especially striking instance of a stela given to a private individual by the king see SETHE, *Urkunden*, I, p. 38 (cf. BREASTED, *Records*, I, § 237).



# THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

The direct address "My Majesty has given to thee, etc." is notable. The sentence may well be an excerpt from the king's letter of gift which Menthu-weser quotes here with pride.

'*b3*' is written in three ways on this stone. Cf. ll. 17 and 19. It commonly designates the offering-table or altar. But here, as not infrequently in the Middle Kingdom, its use is extended by metonymy to the stela before which the offering-table stood. Cf. also an occurrence in a text of the early Eighteenth Dynasty (SETHE, *Urkunden*, IV, p. 27, l. 3) where the word is determined with .

Line 2      The treatment of *hṯp-dj-nj-šwt* as a substantive is well known. In the Middle Kingdom the expression had long since been applied to mortuary offerings of various kinds, received from various sources. Cf. the contemporary stela C 240 in the Louvre<sup>10</sup> where the grandson of the deceased speaks:



“I have erected a grave-stela for my grandfather as an offering which the king gives.” Here in like manner we have a grave-stela designated as a *ḥtp-dj-nj-šwt*, but the giver is not the king. Our passage carries one back to the original and literal meaning of the expression. Another unusual instance, where the king is still the giver, is recorded in a Sixth-Dynasty tomb at Deir el Gebrâwri.<sup>11</sup> Here, if



<sup>10</sup> GAYET, *Stèles de la XII<sup>e</sup> Dynastie*, Pl. 60.

<sup>11</sup> DAVIES, *Deir el Gebrāwri*, II, Pl. XIII, l. 21 and BREASTED, *Records*, I, § 385, note c.





## THE MAIN INSCRIPTION

Professor Meyer's view, quoted in the note cited on the preceding page, be correct, the term *hṭp-dj-nj-šwt* is applied to the title of "count" bestowed upon a deceased person as a mortuary honor.

"Mortuary offerings.....from which a god lives" is to be understood as the rations necessary for one god, that is, the deceased is to be treated as a god. Lines 2-3

The old translation "steward" for   is inadequate. Line 3  
Ll. 5-7 of this inscription (see below) seem to warrant "domain-superintendent."

Menthu-weser (Mont is strong) is one of the common masculine names compounded with the name of the war-god Mont which are so characteristic of the Middle Kingdom. It is only a little less frequent than Menthu-hotep (Mont is satisfied).

The reading *'b-kꜣw* is assured by the compound name     (LANGE-SCHAEFER, *Grabsteine*, No. 20105). Ab-kau (Bull-horns) is a comparatively uncommon name. The eight examples known to the Berlin Dictionary<sup>12</sup> are of the Middle Kingdom and the transitional period immediately preceding it. Six are masculine and two feminine, the name occurring twice on one of the stelae.

<sup>12</sup> See LANGE-SCHAEFER, *Grabsteine*, Nos. 20090, 20105; PIERRET, *Inscr. du Louvre*, II, pp. 29 and 35; *Rec. de trav.*, III, pp. 115-17, No. IV; GRIFFITH and NEWBERRY, *El Bersheh*, I, Pl. 13. There is another occurrence on the Cairo grave-stela No. 1609. Two of the foregoing list occur in LIEBLEIN, *Dictionnaire*, Nos. 204 and 384.

# THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER


## II. MENTHU-WESER'S SPEECH (Pl. II)

### (a) HIS CARE FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD



#### 4 He says

I was one who looked upon the sorrowful (?),  
one who buried the dead,  
one who gave to him who was not.....

Line 4      m33 with preposition r and a following substantive is unusual, but occurs in the Annals of Thutmose III.<sup>13</sup> The preposition, of course, gives a special shade of meaning which I have tried to render with "look upon." The thought is: "I did not pass indifferently by the sorrowful (?) man, but took notice of him and (one may perhaps assume further) helped him." On the meaning of *ind* see ERMAN, *Denksteine aus der thebanischen Gräberstadt* ("Sitzungsber. der königl. preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften," 1911) p. 1089. Cf. also BLACKDEN and FRASER, *Hatnub*, 10 and 11-12. The first passage is incomplete, the second runs:  . . . and the translation given is: "A healing (?) cure for him who came wounded (?)." The meaning "wounded" or "ill" is very naturally suggested by the con-

<sup>12</sup> LEPSIUS, *Denkmäler*, III, 30b, l. 26.

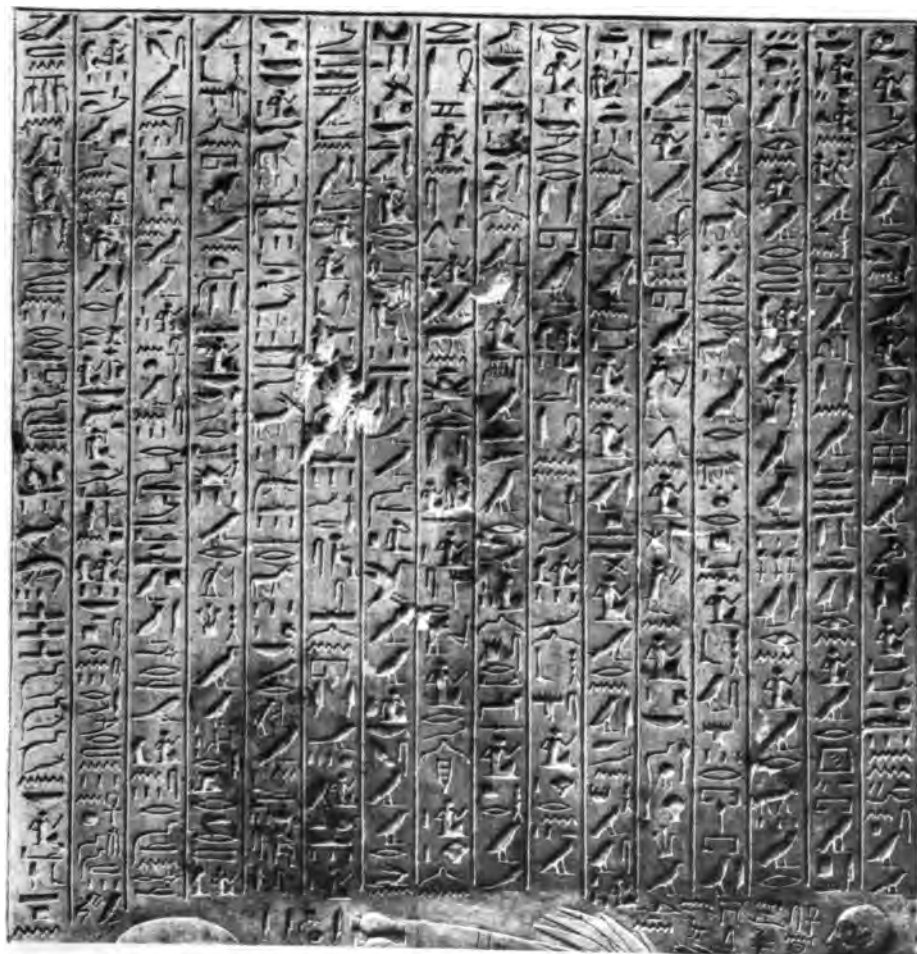



PLATE II.



## THE MAIN INSCRIPTION

text, but is hardly proved by it. "Wounded" as a translation would suit very well in our passage.

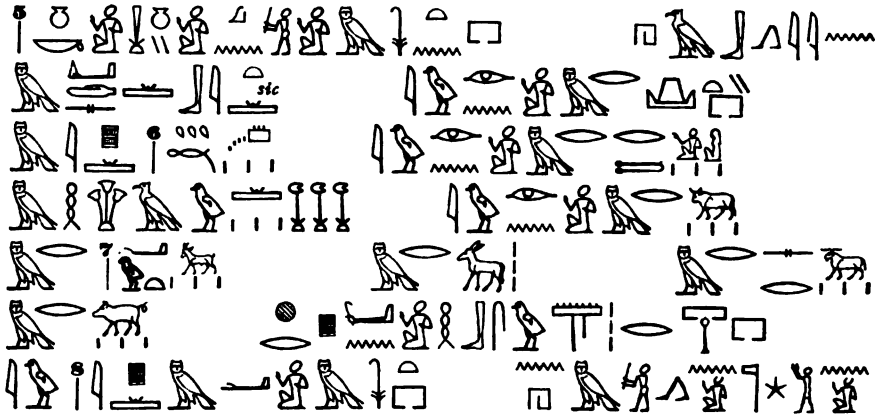
*mꜣꜣw*, *krꜣw* and *dd(w)* are all of like construction, imperfect active participles (?) denoting the habitual act, *śmw* I take for a pseudo-participle, third person masculine singular, but the meaning is not clear. There is, to be sure, the word , "evil," "unholy," which occurs as early as in the Eighteenth-Dynasty inscription, British Museum 5645, l. 13; and the second *n* of the root might be in the sign *nw* which here, because of the pseudo-participial ending *w*, would replace the simple *n*. But one expects rather "I gave to the needy," "hungry" or some such statement and it seems probable that the word in question is unknown or incorrectly written.

The first and third of the group of three statements in this first section of the inscription are unfamiliar. The second "I buried the dead" is characteristic of the period. In various Middle-Kingdom inscriptions the deceased tells of "burying the aged."<sup>14</sup> It seems curious that Menthuwesser's speech should begin as it does. Immediately (l. 5) he turns to his official career and these opening sentences belong more naturally to the other asseverations of his consideration for those about him (ll. 9-14).


<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, BLACKDEN and FRASER, *Hatnub*, II, 7; BOESER, *Beschr. v. de Egypt. Verz. te Leiden*, I, *Stèles*, Pl. IV, l. 8; *Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch.*, XVIII, p. 196, l. 6 of plate.

# THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER


## (b) HIS OFFICIAL CAREER

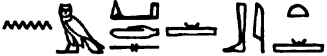

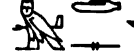







- \* I was a powerful Second (??) in the King's Domain,  
 one sent out because my qualities were pleasing (?).  
 I was a superintendent of the Double Granary,  
 as one who counted the \* northern barley.  
 I was a superintendent of more than three (?) thousand people.  
 I was a superintendent of oxen,  
 a superintendent of 7 gazelles,  
 a superintendent of asses,  
 a superintendent of sheep,  
 a superintendent of swine.  
 I delivered clothing at the Treasury.  
 When \* accounting was made with me in the King's Domain,  
 I went out free (??) and one thanked me.

Line 5       is not a normal writing for "brother" or for "second," but more nearly approaches the latter word. It may be a word of unknown meaning, but one is tempted to interpret: "I was not an official of the highest rank but made a special mark for might or power among the officials

## THE MAIN INSCRIPTION

of second rank."<sup>14a</sup> The entire drift of the inscription leads one to understand  in the wider sense "king's domain" rather than "king's palace."

 contains rare words. BRUGSCH, *Wörterbuch*, Vol. 2, p. 731, recognized a substantive  which he derived from the root  and defined as: "der abgeschnittene, abgesonderte, d. h. distinctus, ausgezeichnete mit Bezug auf einen Greis." Cf. the following passages from inscriptions of the Middle Kingdom: Louvre, Stela C 1,<sup>15</sup>  "because I was *mds* of heart to my lord" and LANGE-SCHAEFER, *Grabsteine*, No. 20543, l. 17,  "I was a favorite of his mistress, being *mds*." Cf. further SETHE, *Urkunden*, IV, p. 18, l. 14. The word is determined with a knife in the other known passages, but the papyrus roll of our inscription may also be correct, since the meaning is abstract. The writing  should be noted. This word is better known and the papyrus roll may be pronounced an error for , but the absence of  is normal for the Middle Kingdom.









"Superintendent of the Double Granary" is hardly to be taken literally. It was probably a title bestowed on many superintendents of sections of the king's lands who

<sup>14a</sup> As this passage is troublesome I record one other suggestion "I was a fellow of the mighty," meaning that he was a companion of the strong men of his time. One would, however, expect to find *kn* in the plural.










<sup>15</sup> PIERRET, *Inscr. du Louvre*, II, p. 27.



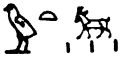


## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

had duties similar to those of Menthu-weser. If Menthu-weser had been in actual charge of the central granary of the kingdom, this title would have taken precedence of   in line three, and we should expect to find him a much greater personage than the inscription otherwise indicates. His actual duty as a    is stated in the next clause, "as one who counted the northern barley," that is, he raised barley on the lands under his charge and performed certain clerical work in connection with its delivery at the central granary. Cf. NEWBERRY, *Beni Hasan*, I, Pl. XXIX, upper register, in which grain is being carried to the top of a granary and poured into the bins. Besides two subordinate scribes, crouched in the midst of the work, and writing busily, the    is seated comfortably in the background, his long mantle drawn about him, and makes certain records.

Line 6      Other inscriptions contain references to "southern barley" and there is surely a play on the "North" and "South," the two halves of the kingdom, in the designation of these two kinds of grain.

I have questioned "three thousand" because the inscription contains so many archaic forms. One may well have here the word thousand rather than three thousand. The usual idiom for "more than" is         . Perhaps an *r* has dropped out here, but more likely its absence is another of the archaic features of the original text. Cf. PETRIE, *Abydos*, II, Pl. XVIII.

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The writing  without the }-sign<sup>16</sup> and deter- Line 7  
 mined with a gazelle should be noted. Especially interesting, however, is the occurrence of swine among the king's herds, as they are only occasionally mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions and were considered unclean. They must have been raised to a considerable extent since they furnish some of the most frequent ingredients in medical recipes.<sup>17</sup> In the Fourth-Dynasty tomb of Meten,<sup>18</sup> a pig and an ass are the two determinatives of 'wt. A tomb at El Kab contains an enumeration of herds affording an interesting comparison with the royal herds under Menthu-weser's charge:   
 <sup>19</sup> "122 cattle, 100 sheep, 1200 gazelles, 1500 swine." In Theban tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty, swine are sometimes shown treading out grain, and we have the authority of Herodotus for their frequent employment in this way.<sup>20</sup> It is possible in this instance that the swine were utilized to tread in the seed, and to thresh the "northern barley."

The "clothing delivered at the Treasury" was, of course, produced on the estate which Menthu-weser administered. The women included under his "more than three (?) thousand people" wove the cloth and fashioned the garments.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. LANGE-SCHAEFER, *Grabsteine*, No. 20001, l. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Fat of swine, EBERS, 71, 6; Berlin P 3038, 3, 2; 4, 3; 8, 9; 9, 6; swine's blood, EBERS, 63, 16; swine's teeth, EBERS, 54, 3; 74, 20, etc.



<sup>18</sup> LEPSIUS, *Denkmäler*, II, Pl. 5.

<sup>19</sup> SETHE, *Urkunden*, IV, p. 75, l. 15.

<sup>20</sup> MARQUIS OF NORTHAMPTON, SPIEGELBERG, NEWBERRY, *Excavations in the Theban Necropolis during the Winter of 1898-99*, Pl. XIII, text, pp. 13-14 and Fig. 15; reference is made here to Herodotus II, 14.

## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

We see here the source of the supplies referred to in such inscriptions as *Sinuhe*, B 287-288,<sup>21</sup> where the hero finds at his disposal "precious things from the Treasury, clothing from the king's linen," or again MARIETTE, *Mastabas*, D 39, where the deceased tells that "clothing" was given him "from the Treasury."

Line 8      The last two sentences of this section are not wholly clear. The general meaning seems to be "when accounts were settled with me it was found that I had administered faithfully (without cheating or the like) and I was thanked for it."  and  are probably in the construction of ERMAN, *Grammatik*, 3d ed., § 285. The determinative of the verb *nbm-nj* indicates motion. Cf. the thought in SETHE, *Urkunden*, IV, p. 77, ll. 6-7, "I went forth therefrom in triumph, my balance (against me) was not found." So perhaps here "I went out free," that is, he was discharged of further financial responsibility.

Menthu-weser's claim in line 5 that he was a strong *šnnj* and the statement that he was thanked for his good administration are not empty boasts. The king's gift of the grave-stela is abundant confirmation of their veracity. A fact of very special interest is that Menthu-weser was responsible directly to the central bureau of the king's domain. He did not render his report to a nomarch, and the nomarch in turn to the king, as has been assumed, chiefly on the evi-

<sup>21</sup> GARDINER, *Die Erzählung des Sinuhe*, Pl. 15 and p. 14.

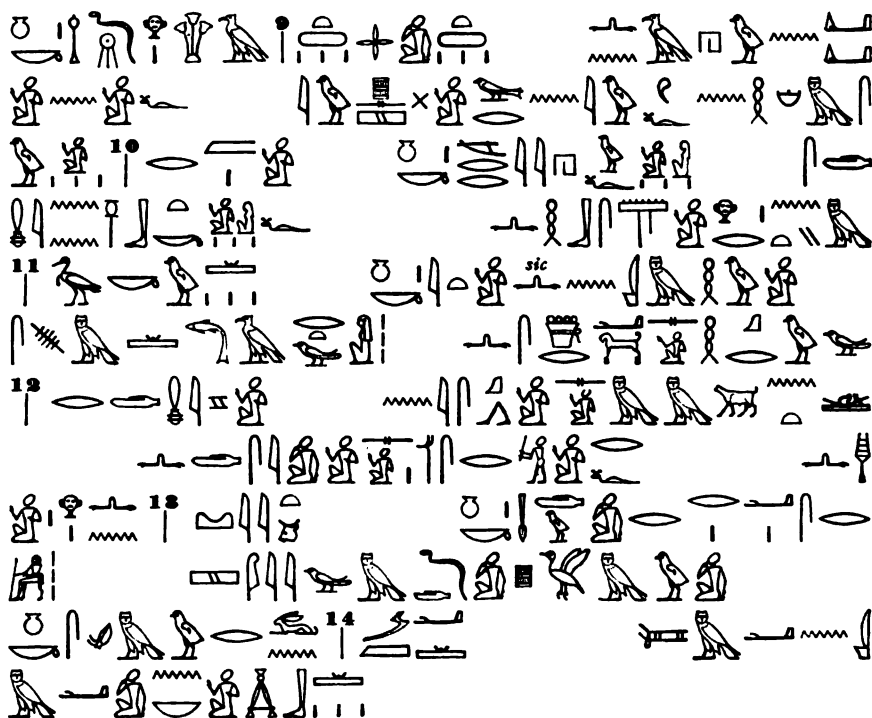
## THE MAIN INSCRIPTION

dence of the Beni Hasan texts,<sup>22</sup> to have been the method of organization generally prevalent during the Twelfth Dynasty.

<sup>22</sup> See on this point MEYER, *Geschichte des Altertums*, I, Part 2, 2d ed., p. 248 and BREASTED, *History of Egypt*, 2d ed., pp. 162 and 163.

## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

### (c) HIS CHARACTER AS SHOWN IN HIS RELATIONS WITH FAMILY, SUBORDINATES, AND SUPERIORS



I was one who was generous.....●.....

There was no distress for the one to whom I gave (?).

I apportioned the chief cut of meat to those sitting <sup>10</sup> at my side.

I was one beloved of his relatives,

one to whom (?) his family was united (?).

I did not cover my face against him who was <sup>11</sup> in arrears (with taxes).

I was a father of the poor orphan child,

one who cared for (?) the widows.

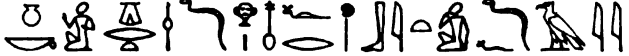

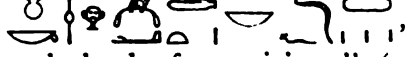
No man slept hungry <sup>12</sup> in my district.







I hindered no man at the ferry.


I did not speak evil (?) of a man when more powerful than he.

## THE MAIN INSCRIPTION

I did not stand upon (?) <sup>13</sup>.....  
 I was one who spoke in accordance with the deeds of princes,  
     one free from saying.....  
 I was one who <sup>14</sup> really listened,  
     one who did not demand (?) of my lord a reward.





















For the idiom "generous" cf. BLACKDEN and FRASER, Line 8  
*Hatnub*, I, 8-9:   
 and British Museum grave-stela, No. 581 (of Middle  
 Kingdom): , "I am one who is  
 generous, liberal, lord of provisions" (translation of A. H.  
 Gardiner). In the context in both these passages there is  
 mention of food, and the words which immediately follow  
*ink ḥd ḥr* in the text under consideration clearly have to do  
 with food. They are, however, unknown elsewhere and the Line 9  
 construction is not evident. The meaning in the light of the  
 statement which follows would seem to be that Menthu-  
 weser gave away food generously.

The translation offered for the next sentence requires  
 a slight emendation of the text,—the addition of the -  
 determinative after   and the omission of the   
 between  and  at the end of the sentence. As the  
 text stands it is unintelligible.

 is perhaps not "a portion of meat," as  
 often translated, but the principal cut of meat, presumably  
 then a leg joint.

The first two sentences contained in line 10 refer to Line 10  
 Menthu-weser's happy family life—his good fortune in having  
 the affection of his relatives and in being surrounded by a

# THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER



household. The Coffin Texts reveal how much value was attached to this aspect of life, in that they contain a chapter entitled "Uniting of the Household (*ꜣbt*) of a Man with Him in the Nether World."<sup>23</sup> In both sentences some emendations are necessary. In the first, one *r* has been added by mistake (unless the participle is active, in which case the ꜥꜥ would be incorrect).  belongs after the determinative and  has been omitted in the word *bꜣw*, "relatives," "family." The following sentence is difficult as it stands. By emending the second  after *šdmj* to , the translation suggested becomes possible. The determinative of the knife for *ꜣbt* appears in the *Book of the Dead*, ed. BUDGE, 189 after Nu 19, 7. For the occurrence of the word on grave-stelae of the Middle Kingdom, cf. British Museum, No. 159: "I was one great in his town, noble in his house, a great pillar of 

Menthu-weser assures us next that he was not haughty toward those humbler than himself. On the contrary, he was kind to the unfortunate. Cf. here a grave-stela of the Middle

<sup>23</sup> Cf. BREASTED, *Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 280



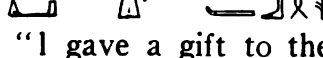
<sup>24</sup> *Rec. de trav.*, XXVI, pp. 67 ff and XXXI, p. 26.

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Kingdom in Leyden:<sup>25</sup>  "A lord  
of provisions, free from covering the face;" *Eloquent Peasant*,  
B 2, l. 105,<sup>26</sup>  "Cover not  
thy face against the one whom thou hast learned to know."

For *bkw* meaning arrears of tax labor, cf. the Amenin-  
 inscription, l. 17.<sup>27</sup>

On the meaning of *nmbw* see ERMAN, *Denkst. aus der theban. Gräberstadt*, pp. 1088–89. The negative  $\neg$  before *nmbw* is of course the stone-cutter's error for the genitive  $\neg$ .

The approximate meaning of *śm* is clear from the following passage: British Museum, No. 581 (stela of the Middle Kingdom), l. 17:  "I am one who alleviates (?) the hungry who has no property" (translation of A. H. Gardiner). Two other instances of the use of this word on grave-stelae of the Middle Kingdom are known to me: BOESER, *op. cit.*, Pl. IV, ll. 8-9, "I buried the aged of my town and I *śm* him who — — — (), " and Cairo, No. 20543, l. 15,  "I gave a gift to the one who begged for it, I *śm* the one whom I knew not as him whom I knew." Cf. also SETHE, *Urkunden*, IV, p. 12, ll. 11, 13, and 15.

"No man slept hungry in my district" is a more picturesque statement than the frequent "I gave bread to the

<sup>25</sup> BOESER, *op. cit.*, Pl. III, l. 14.


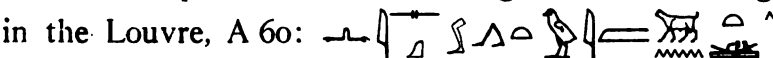
<sup>28</sup> VOGELSANG and GARDINER, *Die Klagen des Bauern*, Pl. 22 and p. 15.

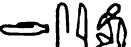


<sup>27</sup> NEWBERRY, *Beni Hasan*, I, Pl. VIII.



# THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

hungry." The speech of Menthu-weser, while typical of its period in thought, is delightfully unusual in some of its phrases.

Line 12      The freedom of the waterway was of the highest importance in ancient Egypt and it belonged to the virtues of a man in power not to hinder anyone in crossing from shore to shore. A personage of the early Middle Kingdom whose gravestone is preserved in Cairo (No. 20506) was even more praiseworthy than Menthu-weser, for he says: "I ferried him who had no boat across in my own ferry." The verb  of our text is not known elsewhere in texts earlier than the Empire. Cf. the following line on a kneeling figure in the Louvre, A 60:  "May I not be held back from the ferry of the Underworld!"


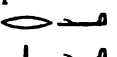
In the next sentence the verb  is obscure. It is possibly the same as that which occurs in the tomb of Sirenpoweret II<sup>28</sup>:  and on the British Museum stela No. 558 of the Middle Kingdom: . In the first example the determinative is the same, in the second the verb governs the word for "man" as in our stela. The omission of the weak consonant *w* in our text is hardly an objection. Of the meaning no more can be said than that it is evil. The determinative of the man with the hand to the mouth suggests, not physical violence, but evil of a more subtle sort, wrought through word of mouth. It is difficult to render

<sup>28</sup> DE MORGAN, *Catal. des monuments et inscript. de l'Égypte antique*, Série I, Tome I, p. 154.

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in English the relative force of *wšrj-r-f*, literally "a man, than whom I was stronger."

The sentence "I did not stand upon (?) . . . ." is Lines 12-13 unintelligible. The last word is unknown and the verb may be used in an idiomatic sense, requiring an entirely different English translation. It seems probable that it belongs in thought with the sentences which precede rather than with those which follow.

We learn now in four sentences how Menthu-weser com- Line 13 ported himself before his superiors. The Berlin Dictionary gives the idiom  or  with following person, "the work of N."

*pšmw* must be some special expression, excuse, or lie, which the unrighteous official used toward his superior officer, which Menthu-weser, however, was never guilty of uttering.

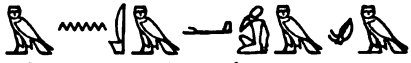
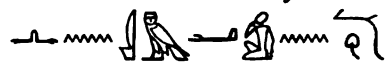



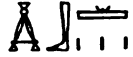
Further, he was not merely silent when his superiors Lines 13-14 spoke,—he listened to their words and took them to heart. "To hearken" was a virtue frequently extolled by the Egyptians. Cf. the *Proverbs of Ptah-hotep*<sup>29</sup> and the following statement with regard to the official Ineni of the Eighteenth Dynasty: "I was one who hearkened to that which his superior said."<sup>30</sup>

When, however, Menthu-weser did speak, it was not to Line 14 make unseemly demands. On  see ERMAN, *Grammatik*, 3d ed., p. 273, Anm. For the following verb, cf.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, PRISSE D'AVENNES, *op. cit.*, 16, 3-12.

<sup>30</sup> SETHE, *Urkunden*, IV, p. 62, l. 1.

## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

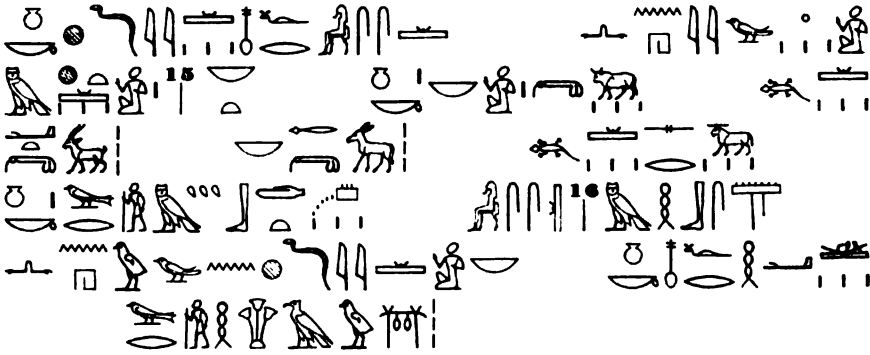
*Eloquent Peasant*, B 2, 104:<sup>31</sup>  and the following passage from another literary composition of the Middle Kingdom:  <sup>32</sup> At the end of the sentence, where one expects ,  is peculiar. Further, the translation offered for line 14, assuming  to be the direct object of the verb *nm*,<sup>c</sup> has the difficulty that the order of the words is thus not the normal one.

<sup>31</sup> VOGELSANG and GARDINER, *op. cit.*, Pl. 22.



<sup>32</sup> ERMAN, *Gespräch eines Lebensmüden mit seiner Seele*, p. 17, line 3 of text.

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### (d) HIS PRIVATE PROPERTY







I was rich (?) and goodly of luxury (?),  
 I sustained no loss (?) in all my property.  
 15 I was possessor of oxen, rich in goats,  
     possessor of asses, rich in sheep,  
 I was wealthy as to barley and wheat,  
     splendid 16 as to clothing.  
 There was no loss in all my riches (?).  
 I had goodly boats  
     and was wealthy as to vineyards (?).

Lines 15-16 contain an interesting enumeration of the private possessions of a  . While administering the king's property, Menthu-weser gradually accumulated wealth for himself. His herds do not include swine, but he raised wheat as well as barley. He had boats of his own and perhaps vineyards. He expressly states that he met with no losses.

There seems no question that the slight break is to be Line 14

## THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

restored in accordance with the word  contained in line 16 and that the partially obliterated word above is , with the signs written side by side. The curve of the  still remains on the left and the tail of the  is unmistakable.













A word *h<sub>d</sub>j* is unknown. Perhaps a weak consonant *w* has been omitted in the writing and we have here to do with the word *hwd* which appears in the *Eloquent Peasant* again and again (ll. B 1, 125 and 272; B 2, 28 and 100); also as follows, B 1, 88-90:<sup>33</sup>












“Thou greatest of the great,

Thou richest (*hwd*) of the rich (*hwdw*)




Who hast ever been (?) the greatest among his great ones,








The richest (*hwd*) among his rich ones (*hwdw*).”




Cf. also *Hatnub* 8, 10 and the following line from the Theban tomb of \* (Eighteenth Dynasty) from a copy made by Professor Sethé for the Berlin Dictionary:        “Thy storehouses are full to overflowing.” A few times in the *Eloquent Peasant*, and in both the other passages cited, the word is determined with the book roll alone as in our text. Our text throughout, in accordance with its archaic tendencies in the writing, shows a preference for  over  as for  over .

Instead of *špśś*, one would expect *špśj-wt*, or at least the plural strokes. Cf.             

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“loss,” the  being an assimilation to the following personal pronoun, literally then, “not was my loss in all my things.” The usual form   appears in line 16.

The stroke in  and the stroke after the determinative Line 15 in  in this line and elsewhere in the inscription are of course erroneous. The horns are omitted from  (see photographic Pl. II), but the preceding sign  ensures the reading *hsw*. I have never before seen *wr*, adjective, determined with . The writing   is archaic. It is known in the Pyramid Texts and also in archaic texts of the Empire, for instance, at Medinet Habu in an account of a festival of Min.<sup>34</sup>

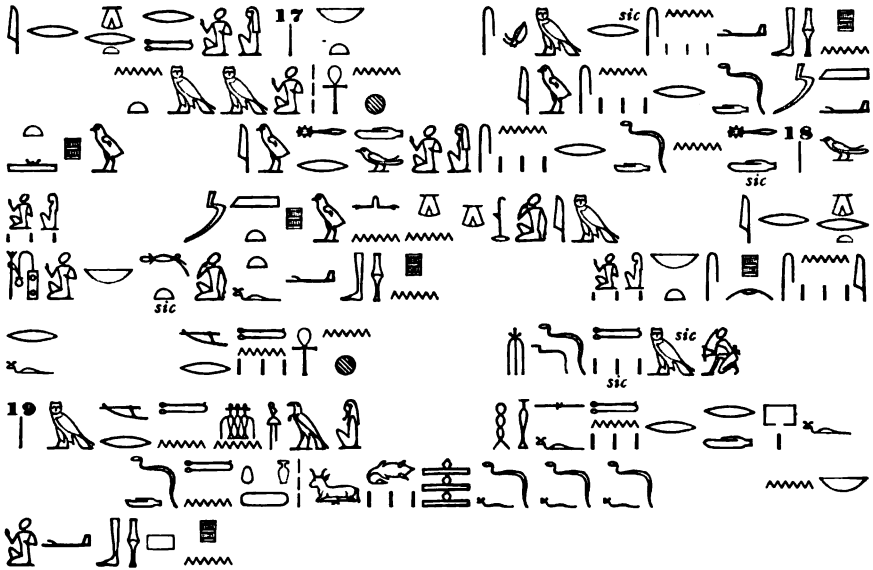
   is unknown. The determinative (see Line 16 Pl. II) resembles the hieratic form of the vine-trellis<sup>35</sup> and is therefore rendered with the hieroglyphic equivalent of this in the printed word. If this be correct, we may assume that “vines” or “vineyards” is the meaning of *hsw*. Possibly there is an intentional play of sound between this and the word for boats.

<sup>34</sup> CHAMPOLLION, *Not. descr.*, I, 733.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. MÜLLER, *Paläographie*, I, No. 267.

# THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

## (e) ADDRESS TO PASSERS-BY



But as for <sup>17</sup> all people who shall hearken to this grave-stela,  
those who are among the living (?),

They shall say: "It is true."

And their children shall say to [their] <sup>18</sup> children:

"It is true, there is no lie therein."

But as for every scribe who shall read this grave-stela  
and as for all people who shall come to it,





If ye love life and hate death,














<sup>19</sup> The First of the Westerners will love you,  
and he will reward you at his Stairway,









If ye say: "Mortuary offerings, beef, fowl, offerings, and food  
for the lord of this grave-stela."




Line 17      The verbal adjective *šdm-tjw-śn* is to be understood literally. The people unable to read, who would have been numerous in those days as now, are first addressed; they must listen to the inscription as read to them. The next formula

## THE MAIN INSCRIPTION

(line 18) is addressed, in the first instance, to the class who could read, the scribes. The stone-cutter's error in substituting  for  in the verbal adjective was one which could take place with special ease in the Middle Kingdom when the tendency in vertical columns written in hieratic was to make a  fill the width of a column quite as completely as an .

The next phrase is difficult. Presumably it must modify or supplement "all people." The letters  are very small, as if they had been forgotten and then inserted after the first  had been cut. If  be read before  , as its position on the stone will admit, and , be read after , instead of preceding it, as written, we get       <sup>36</sup> "who are among the living."

At the beginning of the line the pronoun  has Line 18 probably fallen out after *brdw*, and the *r* is omitted in the writing of the latter word.    is an interesting form,  being substituted for the traditional  in rendering the l-sound preserved in the Coptic ΓΟΛ; cf. ERMAN, *Grammatik*, 3d ed., § 104.  is an unexplainable mistake for .

The following sentences contain many small errors,— for  in the verbal adjective *šdtjffj*, the omission of *t* in *špr(tjw)šn*, the omission of  in the pronoun following *mšdd*, and the omission of *t* in the writing of *mt*.




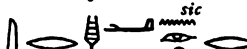
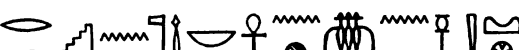


<sup>36</sup> Cf.     in LANGE-SCHAEFER, *Grabsteine*, No. 20088 c, l. 10 and *Rec. de trav.*, III, pp. 115-17, No. IV, l. 9.



# THE STELA OF MENTHU-WESER

Line 19      has been substituted for the usual  in .

The introduction of "at his Stairway" in this formula is unusual. It refers, of course, to the Osiris Sanctuary at Abydos, near which every devout Egyptian hoped to be buried, or at least remembered by a memorial stone—the very place in which Menthu-weser's stela was situated as it made its appeal to passers-by. The reward which Osiris would give, we may suppose to be a tomb or a monument similar to this of Menthu-weser. Cf. the following references

on stelae of the Middle Kingdom to the Stairway of Osiris:  
 "There shall be a tomb built for thee beside the Stairway of the great god, lord of Abydos;"<sup>37</sup>  
Louvre C 5:   
 "Stela which N erected that his name might endure by the Stairway of the great god"<sup>38</sup> and Berlin 1191: <sup>sic</sup>  
 "As regards this tomb which I have made by the Stairway of the great god, lord of life, presider over Abydos."<sup>39</sup> The usual determinative of *r(w)d* is , not .






The writing of "offerings" and "food," each sign repeated three times to express the plural, is archaic.

<sup>87</sup> LANGE-SCHAEFER, *Grabsteine*, No. 20539, reverse, b 2.

<sup>39</sup> PIERRET, *Inscr. du Louvre*, II, pp. 52-53.

<sup>39</sup> *Ausf. Verz. der ägypt. Altertümer und Gipsabg.* Berlin. 2d ed., p. 92.

## NOTES ON THE HIEROGLYPHS

It is noticeable that a number of the signs are reversed: { at the beginning of line 1,  in lines 4, 14, 17, 18, and in the legend accompanying the little figure of Menthu-weser's son;  in line 6. In the main inscription we find , but in the legends  occurs twice.  in line 18 is abbreviated, presumably to accommodate it to the available space; it lacks the small water-pot (or leather pouch of colors, as the case may be) which is regularly a part of this sign

A few of the hieroglyphs are unusual in form. The determinative of *krsw* in line 4 is perhaps a paneled sarcophagus, very high in its proportions. Another possibility is that it represents a coffin with canopy over it, the latter being supported not merely at the corners, but by intermediate uprights and having also horizontal rails midway between the top of the coffin and the roof of the canopy; under this interpretation the omission of the sledge is unusual.<sup>40</sup> The granary containing three grains (line 5) is possibly due to a memory on the part of the stone-cutter of the granaries in offering-lists; these occasionally have inscribed within the

<sup>40</sup> Cf., for instance, DAVIES, *Deir el Gebrawi*, I, Pl. X and II, Pl. VII.

## NOTES ON THE HIEROGLYPHS

names of the grains which they are supposed to contain.<sup>41</sup> The *sm*-sign in line 11 has additional lines above and below and the vertical strokes are simplified.<sup>42</sup> In *h3rt* in line 11 the fish does not have the tail curved down as frequently<sup>43</sup> but is drawn in a horizontal position.<sup>44</sup> The boats in lines 12 and 16 rest on clearly defined *mr*-signs. Usually the indication of water below the boat is a narrow rectangle or mere line. The form on this stela can, however, be paralleled. An unpublished coffin of the Twelfth Dynasty in the Metropolitan Museum (No. 12.182.132) shows the same form with the addition of vertical water lines. The omission of the steering oar is not uncommon. Finally, in the prayer for offerings in line 19 the form of the wild fowl should be noted, drawn in profile, with one leg hanging down, instead of the usual trussed duck seen from below.

<sup>41</sup> For instance, MURRAY, *Sakkara Mastabas*, I, Pl. I.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. for the normal form MÖLLER, *Paläographie*, I, No. 173.

<sup>43</sup> MÖLLER, *op. cit.*, No. 257.

<sup>44</sup> This form of the sign occurs at Beni Hasan. See NEWBERRY, *Beni Hasan*, I, Pl. VIII, line 20.

## LIST OF DATED STELAE OF THE REIGN OF SESOSTRIS I

1. Seventh year: Cairo, No. 20518.<sup>45</sup>
2. Ninth year: Louvre, C 3.<sup>46</sup>
3. Ninth year: Leyden, V 2.<sup>47</sup>
4. Tenth year: Cairo, No. 20026.<sup>48</sup>
5. Tenth year: Cairo, No. 20515.<sup>48</sup>
6. Tenth year: Cairo, No. 20516.<sup>48</sup>
7. Fourteenth year: British Museum, No. 586.<sup>48</sup>
8. Fourteenth year: Berlin, No. 1192.<sup>52</sup>
9. Seventeenth year: Louvre, C 166.<sup>49</sup>
10. Seventeenth year: New York, Metropolitan Museum,  
12.184.
11. Twenty-fourth year: Louvre, C 1.<sup>50</sup>
12. Twenty-fourth year: Cairo, No. 20542.
13. Thirty-third year: Leyden, V 3.<sup>51</sup>
14. Thirty-fourth year: Berlin, No. 1199.<sup>52</sup>
15. Thirty-ninth year: British Museum, No. 572.<sup>53</sup>
16. Forty-fourth year: Leyden, V 4.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>45</sup> LANGE-SCHAEFER, *Grabsteine*, under the numbers cited above.

<sup>46</sup> PIERRET, *Inscr. du Louvre*, II, p. 104.

<sup>47</sup> BOESER, *op. cit.*, Pl. VI.

<sup>48</sup> British Museum. *A Guide to the Egyptian Galleries (Sculpture)*, pp. 39-40 and Pl. VI.

<sup>49</sup> PIERRET, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>50</sup> PIERRET, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> BOESER, *op. cit.*, Pl. II.

<sup>52</sup> Berlin. *Ausf. Verz. der Altertümer und Gipsabg.* 2d ed., p. 89.

<sup>53</sup> *Guide to the Egypt. Galleries*, p. 40.

<sup>54</sup> BOESER, *op. cit.*, Pl. IV.

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